



## POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

### Los Angeles Chargers vs. Los Angeles Rams

Saturday, August 17, 2024 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

#### LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH JIM HARBAUGH

##### **On QB Easton Stick:**

"I thought it was much improved from the game standpoint, but also from the practice standpoint during the week. Good to see the offense moving the ball. Coming out, I thought we had a good first half — first downs and getting the ball to the playmakers. Good to see [WR] Ladd [McConkey] get involved. [WR] Quentin Johnston, [WR] DJ Chark [Jr.] — good to see those guys out there. Good to see some movement up front. I thought [RB] Kimani [Vidal] played well. I think there was a lot of improvement from [Preseason] Week 1 to Week 2."

##### **On the quarterback room:**

"Another week, we're just not going to lighten up — we're going to tighten up. We'd like to see another week of improvement from Easton [Stick] that I saw this week. I'm excited to see it. Another good week of practice, tighten it up and get to that game. Easton will start that and we'll roll."

##### **On quarterback snaps:**

"That was a coaching decision."

##### **On WR Quentin Johnston:**

"Yeah, I've seen good, steady improvement. When he's really playing his technique, doing his job — it looks the way it should. Not only did he draw the illegal contact but he was open by a good amount of steps. Nice to see him go up, make the catch on the sideline — and he darn near came down with the other one. I thought he showed well and did himself good."

##### **On the receivers through camp and the preseason:**

"I feel like we're making improvement — another week, we're going to look for that. A lot of, really things that are in our control, both offensively and defensively, special teams as well — I thought we were much more competitive at the receiver position and, really, all the other position groups as well."

##### **On RB Kimani Vidal:**

"Just his vision — he was running low, getting his pads down. Showed some elusiveness. Showed [the ability to] push the pile or get some movement up front. I thought that was improved as well."

**On areas of improvement for the offense:**

"It's going to come down to points per possession — that's the major stat. You get all the way down to the one and then you fumble the snap or turn the ball over in the red zone — those are the kind of things that you can't do. We've got to control those controllables. I thought it was an improvement to be able to move the ball, make first downs and put drives together — control the ball. Those were good to see. Much better on third down this week. Eliminate the penalties — the false starts, the holdings, offensively, is something we have to do. Obviously, with the quarterback, you can't throw an interception in the red zone or fumble snaps — he knows that. I expect that to be front of mind at all times with the quarterback."

**On the defense:**

"Better. I thought it was really good last week and pleased with the progress. We were better on third down, defensively. I thought the coverage was really good at times — we had some PBUs [pass breakups], but we didn't get as much pressure. Some of these big fourth-down stops, short-yardage stops, goal-line stops, the interception in the end zone was huge. Getting the turnover right when we needed it put our offense in position to have a game-winning drive. Those things are huge. I know the effort is there. I know the competitiveness is there. It's just some fixable things. The way we played the post in quarter coverage — the safety was flat-footed, and the corner was too low. We allowed them to throw that one over our head. It is kind of similar to throwing a red zone interception if you were on offense or fumbling the snap at the goal line. Those things that we can control — just to be much better at that. We're panicking on a go ball and they're going to call that every time, DPI [defensive pass interference]. Getting a team backed up, when we're backed up — we've got to keep them there. We've got to keep them and flip that field position. We can't allow them to move the ball off the goal line. That's another week that we allowed a team to do that, backed up inside their 10-yard line — we've got to get the ball back for the offense. Three-and-out or one first down and out. We'll just keep chipping away at it. Like I said, I think the effort is there. The other thing that bothers me is we made some really good halftime adjustments, and guys have to listen — they've got to listen, really lock in. We came out of halftime and quarterback under center, right off the ball with motion. Here comes the boot. Here comes the naked and we let two of those get out right at the beginning of the second half. All in all, story of fixable things and the things that we can control. It's up to us, I don't want any long faces or woe-is-me type of stuff. We have to lock in on those details and control the things that we can control in all phases — offense, defense and special teams."

**On if injuries 'change the approach' to the quarterback position:**

"No.

"Why would we? We have one of the best starting quarterbacks in the world. The next quarterback would be under the same expectations as if [QB] Justin [Herbert] was there or wasn't there — if he wasn't playing in these last two games. You still want to see the same improvement. You still want to see the same type of performance and improvement."

**On building the team without QB Justin Herbert playing in preseason:**

"Yeah, I'm not sure how much Justin would have been playing.

"I don't think it is affecting the things that we can control. The things that I am talking about are the things we can control, offensively, defensively, special teams. We had a good week. We had good week of practice. We had two or three of our best days of practice, offensively. I thought it showed and that's good. Now, we need another one. Now, we need to stack another practice, another two practices, another week of practice and get the improvement that we seek."

**On LB Shaq Quarterman:**

"So far, so good."

**On Justin Herbert's recovery:**

"I believe so, yes. I think I am qualified to say that he is on track."

## **LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK EASTON STICK**

### **On his comfort level:**

"I think I felt comfortable last week. I think we executed it a bit better this week, but obviously, we left a lot out there, points and yards. That part is frustrating. Defense played really good two weeks in a row. Frustrating that we couldn't score more. We had opportunities to help them out."

### **On the turnover in the red zone:**

"I dropped the snap."

"I dropped it. It's on me. It was a good snap. It hit my hands and I dropped it."

### **On the offensive execution:**

"Yeah, I thought we ran the ball, obviously, a lot better. Guys made plays. We just have to get out of our own way a little bit and, obviously, it starts with me being cleaner. In this league, the margins are so small — you guys know that. You can't drop a snap at the one-yard line. You can't have tipped balls. You can't have penalties. All that stuff, it adds up. We did take a step, we got better, but there is a lot of room out there for us to grow."

## **LOS ANGELES RAMS PASS GAME COORIDNATOR/ASSISTANT HEAD COACH AUBREY PLEASANT**

### **Opening statement:**

“First, before we get started, there's just a couple of things I would like to do. First, I would like to thank this organization. I'd like to thank [Head] Coach [Sean] McVay, specifically, and I'd like to thank [General Manager] Les, [President] Kevin [Demoff], and [Vice President, Football & Business Administration] Tony [Pastors] for believing in me and for giving me this opportunity to represent the organization in this game. It's different when one person who as a head coach believes in you, but collectively as an organization in order to give me this opportunity, it does not sit very lightly with me. I thank this organization for believing in me.”

### **On the experience of being the head coach for this game:**

“You envision what it's like, if this is one of your aspirations or one of your goals. It was a very good feeling to know that we were able to fire off, be aggressive and assertive in all three phases. There were things that we talked about during pregame of what we wanted this to look like, what we want it to feel like. We wanted to feel the energy and that's what I wanted to give to them, and as well for them to give back to me. That was a great experience. You can't underestimate what it means to be a head coach — to talk to the refs, to understand the rules, to walk up and down the sideline, when to use your challenge flag, which plays are reviewable, which plays are not, which plays are challengeable, which plays are not. Those are some of the things that I tried to prep myself for in the last week or so. I think it helped me very much for today.”

### **On pulling from coaching on both sides of the ball:**

“In my career, I have spent two years on offense. My first year, I worked with the offensive line, I worked with running backs. The next time I got the opportunity to work on the offensive side of the ball, I worked with quarterbacks. That experience is second-to-none anytime you sit in that head seat. After being here today, I totally get and understand why owners are looking for new head coaches love people who have had offensive perspective. One, your quarterback touches the ball every snap, and you want to be able to communicate with them. You want to be able to communicate with them in a way that's not only emotionally productive, but also educationally, ‘What is something you can take from this?’ Those two experiences definitely helped me today. Not only communicating with the coaches, but also independently communicating with each position group and how can I give them a small tidbit from my personal experience as well as my professional.”

### **On being in a victorious locker room as head coach:**

“I tried to not give a team ball today, talk about the collective effort. I really thought it was about us, offense, defense and special teams. Right as I said there will be no game ball and [Head] Coach Sean McVay said ‘No, forget that. Game ball for Aubrey!’ Here with the Rams, we talk about how the, ‘We’ is greater than the me,’ and I just wanted to reflect that in this situation. But really, it's just a nod to Coach McVay on what he thought about the opportunity that I was able to receive. I am very grateful.”

### **On waving the challenge flag:**

“It's just about being ready. Understanding what happened the week before, understanding how you're evaluated in your job and wanting to present yourself in the best way and manner. I just wanted those guys to know that if anything happened, I would be ready for it. Being ready, you still have a great staff to help communicate with you to make the best decision, but it's up to you, as a leader, to be ready. It is also up to you, as a leader, to be able to assign people who do very well in their job to be able to help you with that. I think that is something Sean [McVay] has done exceptionally here and I was able to take the fruits of that labor today for myself, and I see why it's so valuable for Sean.”

**On surprises of the responsibility of being head coach:**

“No, there was nothing that surprised me. There was one opportunity I thought that I could have been a little bit better with my situational mastery. There was a play, I think the offense was going to snap the ball and they had the opportunity at the end of the half that they kind of let the clock bleed out. I could have used a timeout to save that for our offense for two-minute, but I felt like from my experience on offense that they were rushing to the ball a little faster than I had assumed. So maybe they aren’t thinking what I am thinking, maybe they are just going to snap the ball regularly, and if that was a regular season game, I probably wouldn’t have given them the opportunity for that. I probably would have just used the timeout. As a coach, you should be coachable. I am already being critical of myself. I think that’s probably one thing I could be better at.”

**On the feel of the speed of the game as head coach:**

“I joked with one coach that today made me miss being on offense. It is a different style of coaching, it’s a different form of headsets, but I would say the flow of the game definitely goes by much faster. Your attention is needed in different places. For those of you who have seen me be a position coach, my energy needed to be different today to lead a group of men. I wanted to be able to give that to them just energy-wise and those guys going back-and-forth. The other thing is that you talk about the pendulum, how it swings back-and-forth between offense, defense and special teams. Having that headset, you really feel it. You know how important that positive reinforcement is after something that is maybe unforeseen.”

**On responding to team mistakes:**

“My experience of being able to coach on offense, defense, and special teams at this level has really taught me the importance of player mental health. One thing we do here is talk a lot about modeling the way. I am really proud that Coach McVay was able to change the messenger, but I wasn’t going to change the message. I wanted them to know that when they came to the sideline there would be no enemy over here. Those guys needed that support at that time. There is a difference between not taking full advantage of an opportunity and not being ready. And we were ready, but sometimes when things don’t go your way, you can’t always determine the consequences, but you can take care of those choices and that’s what I wanted to provide for those guys.”

**On the 47-yard touchdown to WR JJ Laap:**

“What I really wanted to make important to all of the players before they went to the field is how important this opportunity was for me and how I want them to matched that importance that I knew it was for them. These guys work so hard and to capitalize their opportunities when they get that moment and that is the perfect example of that young man doing that, but also [QB] Stetson [Bennett] on time, putting it where it needs to be, and the offensive line, we were fighting struggles here and there, but they protected at the most important time.

“One thing we did today, offensively, is they allowed me to have my say. They allowed me to say what I thought, would I use more run, more pass, more aggressive or not, but Sean [McVay] was still on the headset and we did a good job collectively communicating.”

**On balancing his responsibilities:**

“I believe that if you have a vision, you should start with it in mind. I knew that, ultimately, I would love to be at this podium and be able to help a team establish their goals. By me knowing that, along the way, I knew that if I ever had that opportunity that I wanted to make sure that the guys underneath me were able to lead. That’s what I think all good coaches and all good leaders do, is help empower those that are underneath you, or maybe give them opportunities before they think they are ready, when they are, so when it comes, they are able to go. That’s what we did today. Not only was I elevated in position, but there were two very important coaches under me that got elevated. With that being said, I told the entire team and coaching staff that I was very thankful, because there are several other coaches on this staff that arguably have just as good of resumes as I do, but, to allow me to go and lead, and for them to give me their heart and soul, it just meant everything to me today and I am very appreciative to the entire organization and staff.”

## **LOS ANGELES RAMS QUARTERBACK STETSON BENNETT**

### **On his performance:**

"I'm thinking about individual plays where — I don't like scoring 13 points. I know it's preseason, but just specific plays where I missed on the first drive or maybe it was the second drive where I missed the little roll-out to the flat-route to — I can't remember who was running it. I think overall the operation and execution was better, yes.

### **On his touchdown pass:**

"They went quarters and we've been running the ball, so the safety kind of bit up and [WR] JJ [Lapp] was basically one-on-one out there on the corner because the safety had bit up. I just put it up and made a good play."

### **On prepping for tonight's game:**

"I didn't do anything differently. Just kept things the same. It's hard to judge what might need to be different on the first game. Just kept it the same. Playing in another game helps you to settle it down more."

### **On coming back from interceptions:**

"We've got to do it the next play. We've got to do the next thing. That's what's best for the team. That's what's best for me and everybody else who is involved. You can't really sit on the past. You got to go for it."

### **On avoiding mental mistakes:**

"We had one. I made a check and we moved somebody over. I wasn't supposed to move them over because we were supposed to block the safety. Even though it was a weird look, we got that corrected and won't make that mistake again. When you don't play football for so long, you want it to be perfect but you have to make those mistakes to learn from them. As much as I don't want to do that, right? It is good that some things like that happen to you so you can learn from them."

### **On watching film from the previous game:**

"If something doesn't feel right, it's probably not and you don't have to force it. You don't have to make something happen that's not there, you know, throw it away, check it down live to fight another play if that's an option."

### **On building confidence with teammates:**

"I think they're helping me immensely. It's hard to get better at football if you don't play football. I think every single snap, I'm grateful for it and trying to do my best for them."

### **On relationship with WR JJ Laap:**

"He was fired up. I think he spiked it and that made me laugh. He can roll. I don't think it doesn't really matter where you're from if you can roll. We've put him in those positions a few times and he's executed. Kind of built that trust with him whenever the situation comes up, you're like, 'Well maybe he's going to do it again.' Which he did."

### **On the team believing in him:**

"I think it's — first of all, a first-class organization. It means a lot. Not that that's the reason why you come into work every day, but it does give you that little extra, 'Oomph,' maybe when you don't feel like it. Maybe you're sore or something happens. You do have these people behind you and they are encouraging you. They do believe in you and it's very encouraging. It helps give you that little extra ounce whenever you need it."